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On the Ruins of Babel

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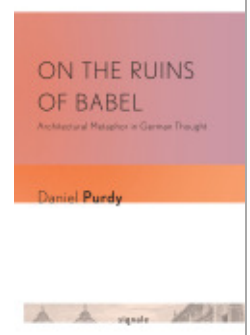
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The Building in *Bildung*: Goethe, Palladio, and the Architectural Media

Well before photography and electronic networks encircled the planet, there existed a European migratory channel within which architectural images were carried across the Alps by tourists and pilgrims.¹ Moving along well-established pathways, architectural drawings, treatises, and personal recollections operated as a self-replicating network that allowed travelers, once home, to recreate the buildings they so admired abroad. The northern European reception of Andrea Palladio (1508–1580), facilitated by the elegant woodcuts and explanations in his *Four Books of Architecture* (1570) and by the prominence of his buildings in cities and estates between Vicenza and Venice, demonstrates the effectiveness of this premodern media circuit. The efforts, first British, then German, to emulate Palladio's villas, palaces, and churches constitute one of the most successful examples of premodern stylistic proliferation.²

1. Dana Arnold, "Facts or Fragments? Visual Histories in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Art History* 25 (2002): 450–468.

2. Deborah Howard writes that the *Quattro libri dell'architettura* "were to become probably the most influential of all architectural books. Certainly the treatise had a far wider influence than Palladio's own buildings." Deborah Howard, "Four Centuries of Literature on Palladio," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 39 (1980): 224–241. Werner Oechslin provides the newest, most comprehensive sweep of Palladio's resonance in *Palladianismus: Andrea Palladio—Kontinuität von Werk und Wirkung* (Zurich: gta Verlag, 2008). Surveys of Palladianism in Germany include Erik Forssman, "Palladio und Deutschland," in *Palladio: Werk und Wirkung* (Freiburg: Rombach, 1997), 113–146; David Watkin and

Not only did Palladian architecture reproduce itself throughout Europe and North America, but it integrated comfortably with other media. For many in the late eighteenth century, Palladian architecture seemed to enhance the production of literary texts, the recollection of foreign adventures, and the self-understanding of the modern subject. More than just a backdrop for the idyllic production and reception of literature, northern European Palladianism was deployed as a technology capable of assisting in the conscious reproduction of experience. Through architectural and imagistic simulation, Palladianism sought both to inspire reminiscences of earlier travels and to encourage their repetition. Stressing the importance of architectural journals, Beatriz Colomina has argued that twentieth-century architecture was constituted within its own photographic representation.³ Renaissance buildings, while moving through much slower networks, were also understood through their media representation, rather than through the existential perception of their space. For a great portion of Europe, Palladio's own buildings existed first and foremostly as drawings that allowed, indeed encouraged, the construction of similar buildings far removed from the original site. Once the first Palladian imitations rose in northern Europe, they encouraged a new audience to travel back to the original models for further inspiration and emulation. This loop has run for so long that it is impossible today to understand Palladio except through Palladianism.⁴

Goethe's *Italian Journey* was a critical component of this network, reinforcing its operation even as the text sought to escape its terms. Despite his disdain for travel literature, Goethe's memoir became the best-known German representation of Italy in general, and of Palladio in particular.⁵ Goethe's letters and memoirs, furthermore, document how the imagistic recollection of buildings moved back and forth across the Alps. His writing about Italy makes clear not only that he had read treatises about the sites he planned to visit beforehand, but also that he had grown up amid engravings his father had brought back from his own Italian travels.⁶ Thus, despite the literary historical rupture ascribed to Goethe's sojourn in

Tilman Mellinghof, *German Architecture and the Classical Ideal* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), 17–22; Kurt Forster, "Palladianism in Germany," and Jörgen Bracker, "The Circulation of Palladianism in Germany," both in *Palladio and Northern Europe: Books, Travellers, Architects*, ed. Guido Beltramini (Milan: Skira, 1999), 169–176 and 177–193; Harald Keller, *Goethe, Palladio und England* (Munich: Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1971).

3. Beatriz Colomina, "Architectureproduction," in *this is not architecture*, ed. Kester Rattenbury (London: Routledge, 2002), 207–221.

4. "Unser Verständnis Palladios [ist] zwangsläufig durch den Palladianismus vermittelt." Kurt Forster and Martin Kubelik, *Palladio: Ein Symposium* (Einsiedeln: Schweizerisches Institut in Rom, 1980), 12.

5. For an overview of German literary scholarship, see Peter J. Brenner, *Der Reisebericht in der deutschen Literatur*, Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur 2, Sonderheft (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1990), 286–319.

6. Just as no trip to Rome can be undertaken without the influence of predecessors, neither can an essay be written on Goethe without acknowledging those who have covered the same terrain. Herbert von Einem explains the importance of Goethe's father in "Goethes Italienische Reise," in *Beiträge zu Goethes Kunstauffassung* (Hamburg: Marion von Schröder, 1956), 49–50 in particular. Von Einem's

Rome, the trip south was motivated in large part by desires generated through this already well-established circuit of Italian images. Goethe's travelogue makes clear that he was eager to compare his memories of the pictures he knew as a boy with the actual places. In this sense Goethe can be said to have "inserted" the human subject into the migratory movement of classical images. German scholars in earlier generations had formulated long theories about the greater world based solely on their own readings. Kant felt empowered to present authoritative theories about global cultural geography in his popular anthropology lectures even though he had never left Königsberg. The late eighteenth century brought with it the new northern European demand that one not judge a work of art unless one had done more than see its image, or even just look at it briefly, as aristocrats on the grand tour might have done; instead one had to engage it with all one's being.⁷ The site had to be questioned, the critical commentaries challenged, every old tale one had ever heard about the place had to be compared with what one saw directly. This kind of personal investigation not only had the potential to alter the judgment of the spectator, but also threatened, or promised, to fundamentally reconfigure the observer, who had so completely thrown himself into the aesthetic moment. Within this new subjective mode, skepticism regarding tourist literature provided one of the strongest motives for travel. The mistrust of all representations became a reason to abandon the book and to see for oneself, thereby establishing the viewing subject as the definitive arbiter of architectural meaning. Even as he critically compared images with the actual site, Goethe came to acknowledge an aesthetic intention in Palladio's architectural drawings that went beyond the technical, mimetic representation of a building. As with earlier travelers, such as the English architect Inigo Jones, Goethe's engagement with Palladio involved making comparisons that moved impulsively between his treatise and his buildings.⁸ Goethe, unlike Jones, did not travel with a library of architectural books that today still bear his annotations. However, he did buy Palladio's treatise in Padua, using it initially as an authoritative introduction to classical architecture, and then later as a work to question critically.

work thoroughly recounts Goethe's wonder at Italian architecture; however, it does not treat his efforts in Italy to write around the obvious and the famous, nor his responses to the inevitable disappointments any longed-for trip entails.

7. Friedrich Kittler describes the break between this baroque mode of reading the world and the romantic subjective engagement with its sites: "The Republic of Scholars is endless circulation, a discourse network without producers or consumers, which simply heaves words around. . . . German poetry thus begins with the Faustian experiment of trying to insert Man into the empty slots of an obsolete discourse network." Friedrich Kittler, *Discourse Networks* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 4.

8. Sarah Mcphee, "The Architect as Reader," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 58 (1999): 457. Whereas Jones sought to position himself back at court once he had studied in Italy, Goethe's intentions were quite the opposite.

Although Goethe adopted the styles of antiquity while traveling in Italy, he did not fundamentally alter the phenomenology of architecture that he had articulated as a young man.⁹ In his first essay on architecture, "On German Architecture," Goethe presented a radically subjective variation on the eighteenth-century expectation that a building reveal its aesthetic quality by creating an emotional response in the viewer. Drawing from *Hamlet*, while anticipating *Faust*, Goethe rewrote the Enlightenment's sensible contemplation of a facade into a melancholic invocation of the dead architect's spirit. Decades after his Strasbourg experience, he characterizes his first encounters with Italian architecture in much the same mournful manner. In both Strasbourg and northern Italy, Goethe interprets buildings by constructing dialogues with the ghost of the architect. In Venice he remarks that "architecture rises out of its grave like a ghost from the past, and exhorts me to study its precepts, not in order to practise them or enjoy them as a living truth, but, like the rules of a dead language, in order to revere in silence the noble existence of past epochs which have perished for ever."¹⁰ Although Goethe is here referring to his discovery of Roman architecture, the awakened ghost metaphor readily describes his approach to the Strasbourg cathedral, as well as his "conversations" with Palladio. In every case, the dialogue with the imaginary architect entails a critical exchange, in which the faults of buildings are examined along with their best features.

Goethe defines architecture as an ancient art, one in which rules were established and then forgotten. Hence he approaches monumental buildings mournfully so as to recover the lost intentions they embody. Despite his later involvement in Weimar construction projects, Goethe studied architecture for the sake of hermeneutic transport, to imagine a historical past. Learning the rules of the discipline for the sake of actually designing and constructing a building was not his immediate goal. However, unlike the writers of baroque and rococo treatises, he did not consider architecture only in terms of the beautiful. He had absorbed enough Enlightenment critique of ostentation that his reflections on buildings always stressed the utilitarian purpose they serve. The Vitruvian categories of *firmitas* and *utilitas* became moments in a historicist analysis of beauty in buildings. Thus, for example, the fact that ancient aqueducts, temples, and stadiums were designed to serve an entire community defined Goethe's aesthetic analysis of such structures.¹¹

9. Von Einem, "Goethes Italienische Reise," 184.

10. J. W. Goethe, *Italian Journey*, trans. W. H. Auden and Elizabeth Mayer (London: Penguin, 1970), 103 [translated passages from Goethe's *Italian Journey* throughout are from the Auden and Mayer translation unless otherwise indicated]; "Die Baukunst steigt wie ein alter Geist aus dem Grabe hervor, sie heißt mich ihre Lehren wie die Regeln einer ausgestorbenen Sprache studieren, nicht um sie auszuüben oder mich in ihr lebendig zu erfreuen, sondern nur um die ehrwürdige, für ewig abgeschiedene Existenz der vergangenen Zeitalter in einem stillen Gemüte zu verehren" (12 October 1786). [Citations of *Italienische Reise* in the German original will refer to Goethe's entry date rather than the page number of a particular edition.]

11. "Eine zweite Natur die zu bürgerlichen Zwecken handelt, das ist ihre Baukunst, so steht das Amphitheater, der Tempel und der Aquadukt. Nun fühle ich erst wie mir mit Recht alle Willkürlichkeiten verhaßt waren" (27 October 1786).

In his Strasbourg essay, Goethe formulated a highly subjective, spectatorial manner of judging architecture. In the diaries and essays he wrote from 1788 to 1790, and especially later in his 1816 memoir, *Italian Journey*, Goethe gave greater complexity to his phenomenology of architecture. His mode of apprehending was not dependent on a building's style. Standing before structures built in the late Renaissance, he sought, as he had with the medieval Gothic, to extrapolate his immediate impressions into an empathetic relationship between himself and the architect, which in turn would foster his own writing. For Goethe, architecture was to be viewed in order to educate the spectator, not only about technical matters of construction and the virtue of classical beauty, but also about the aesthetic aspirations of the architect and the self-understanding of his epoch.

Throughout his career Goethe wrote about individual encounters with buildings as fundamentally visual experiences.¹² His long engagement with the work of Palladio in northern Italy elaborated the spectatorial terms formulated in the Strasbourg essay, wherein the building mediates a fantastical connection between observer and architect. In contemplating monumental buildings, Goethe aspires to comprehend the artistic intentions that motivated their design. He interprets buildings teleologically, in order to “speak” with the artists behind them. The empathetic triangle—spectator, building, architect—often stands in opposition to the established scholarly discourse. In his reveries Goethe inevitably cites some learned opinion or tourist brochure that has brought him to the site, but he then disparages it for missing the crucial point. In the dynamic of Goethean identification, the building functions as the valued text (akin to Werther's Homer), whereas pamphlets and scholarly opinion serve as the negative contrast. This division is made more complicated in Italy when Goethe begins to critique Andrea Palladio's *Four Books of Architecture* as he visits the architect's many buildings.

While Goethe frames his engagement within the language of immediate experience, thereby insisting on its singularity, it becomes clear over the course of his travels that his judgments are indebted to the established architectural and poetic discourses of the late eighteenth century. Goethe's architectural aesthetic elaborates on the French tradition of Marc-Antoine Laugier's *Essay on Architecture* (1753) and Nicolas Le Camus de Mézières's *Genius of Architecture; or, the Analogy of That Art with Our Sensations* (1780), wherein the character of a building is evaluated in terms of the emotions it evokes in observers.¹³ Describing the German reception of

12. Later, in 1823, when Goethe wrote a preface for the republication of his youthful essay, he excused his long advocacy of classical architecture by stating that for many years, and even while in Rome, he had not “faced” a true Gothic cathedral; thus he had forgotten the style's splendor. There is much cant in this return to the Gothic; however, it does demonstrate how reflection on architecture depended on the presence of a building.

13. Nicolas Le Camus de Mézières, *The Genius of Architecture; or, the Analogy of That Art with Our Sensations*, trans. David Britt, intro. Robin Middleton (Santa Monica: Getty Center for the History of

French architectural theory, Ulrich Schütte observes: "The aesthetic of architecture constitutes itself... in the juxtaposition of the viewer and the viewed building."¹⁴ This visual mode of judgment concentrated on the facade as the screen from which all architectural concerns could be interpreted. Behind the facade, both literally and figuratively, lay the practical engineering concerns of the architect as well as his spatial arrangement of the building's interior. Adherence to the classical orders was less important to the eighteenth century than the feelings a building evoked.¹⁵ As Jens Bisky noted, "As the rules fell into doubt, subjective experience advanced in a previously unimaginable manner to become decisive in making judgments."¹⁶ Schütte borrows the term *Wirkungsästhetik* from literary criticism to name the architectural proposition that a harmonious and beautiful building must inspire similar sensations in the spectator.¹⁷ Even though this discourse emphasized subjective responses over traditional rules, most critics did not abandon the pretense that emotional responses to buildings could be shared generally, if not universally. Goethe's apprehension of Italian architecture is more thoroughly subjective, for it combines visual images he has known since his youth, scholarly debates over Italian art, and the memory of his father.

In his *Italian Journey*, Goethe's spectatorship develops from a simple touristic awe into a self-conscious awareness of his place as an observing subject. Along the way to Rome, buildings and their architects are incorporated into the larger project of *Bildung*, so that architecture becomes an opportunity for the subject to contemplate himself and his relation to history. Goethe's intense identifications meant that buildings were at times treated as individuals, as entities comparable to the viewer. Taken to its metaphorical extreme, the rise and fall of buildings represents the history of the viewing subject. Although treatises present buildings as static entities, unchanging monuments that exist in an ideal perfection, travel through Italy with its many half-standing ruins undid this presumption.¹⁸ Ancient structures come to embody the process of critical self-reflection and personal change. While buildings in their imperfect condition portray the fatigue and decay of the aging poet,

Art and the Humanities, 1992); Marc-Antoine Laugier, *An Essay on Architecture*, trans. Wolfgang Herrmann and Anni Herrmann (Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, 1977).

14. "Die Ästhetik der Architektur konstituiert sich... im Gegenüber von Betrachter und betrachtetem Gebäude." Ulrich Schütte, *Ordnung und Verzierung: Untersuchungen zur deutschsprachigen Architekturtheorie des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Braunschweig: Vieweg, 1986), 29.

15. The classical orders of columns (Doric, Ionic, Corinthian, Tuscan, and Composite) were derived from the sole surviving treatise from antiquity, Vitruvius's *Ten Books of Architecture*, written in the first century B.C. Renaissance architects such as Sebastiano Serlio and Giacomo Vignola first canonized the orders into rules all architects needed to apply.

16. "Als die Regeln zweifelhaft wurden, avancierte die subjektive Erfahrung auf vorher undenkbarer Weise zur Urteilsinstanz." Jens Bisky, *Poesie der Baukunst: Architekturästhetik von Winckelmann bis Boisseree* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau Nachfolger, 2000), 5.

17. Schütte, *Ordnung und Verzierung*, 26.

18. In his notes about visiting the temple in Segeste, Goethe writes: "Die Gegend ruht in trauriger Fruchtbarkeit. Alles bebaut und fast nicht bewohnt" (FA 2.3: 763).

the architect becomes a recuperative figure, who comprehends the ruin as a whole before commencing its repair. The architect holds a distant point of reflection, the Archimedean platform, where critical thought stands outside the self in order to judge and reconstruct it.

Just as Goethe's memoirs have guided later Germans through Italy, allowing them to compare their own impressions with those of the writer, his own first impressions of Italian sites were conditioned by his father, who had gone there in 1740 and had so enjoyed himself that he filled his house in Frankfurt with pictures of Italy, regaled his family with tales of distant cities, wrote his own memoirs, and obliged his entire family to take lessons in the language.¹⁹ As Goethe arrives in Italy, he recalls suddenly his father's stories and reproductions.²⁰ Unlike Walter Benjamin, who cannot remember his childhood through the famous sights of Berlin, Goethe's boyhood is revived by the monuments of Rome, yet, like Benjamin, he cannot bring himself to recount these places in his letters and later memoir.²¹ In his correspondence with friends in Weimar, most notably his beloved Charlotte von Stein, and later in the published edition, Goethe presumes his readers are already familiar with the grand views. Indeed, Goethe's writing is characterized by a deliberate avoidance of description that might itself reproduce what his readers could already find in an engraving.²² Rather than recount what he saw in Italy, he often wrote about how the real sites compared to his memory of drawings he had seen before his journey. The letters home do not so much compare the site with the engraved image as with its recollection, a far more defuse and emotional construction, for the memory of an image is closely tied with when, where, and how it was first seen.

Far from claiming that the medial representation of Rome guided Goethe's experiences of the place, I would argue that Goethe's writing is always working

19. "Mein Vater war überhaupt lehrhafter Natur, und bei seiner Entfernung von Geschäften wollte er gern dasjenige, was er wußte und vermochte, auf andre übertragen. . . . Wobei [meine Mutter] sich genötigt sah, auch in der italienischen Sprache einige Kenntniss und notdürftige Fertigkeit zu erwerben" (FA 1.14: 20). Victor Lange also compares the two travelogues, in "Goethe's Journey in Italy: The School of Seeing," in *Antipodische Aufklärung: Festschrift für Leslie Bodi* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1987), 229.

20. Norbert Miller, "Der Dichter ein Landschaftsmaler," in *Goethe und die Kunst*, ed. Sabine Schulze (Stuttgart: Hatje, 1994), 386.

21. "Gewiß stehen zahllose Fassaden der Stadt genau wie sie in meiner Kindheit gestanden haben. Der eignen Kindheit aber begegne ich in ihrem Anblick nicht. Zu oft sind meine Blicke seitdem an ohnen entlanggestrichen, zu oft sind sie Dekor und Schauplatz meiner Gänge und Besorgungen gewesen." Walter Benjamin, *Berliner Chronik* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), 53–54.

22. Tom Beebe understands "the lack of extensive, objective, disengaged description of Italy as a whole culture or landscape" as an indication of Goethe's drive to construct his own personal narrative of Italy. Goethe particularly avoids including the historical significance of locations in favor of an individual, aestheticized perspective. Tom Beebe, "Ways of Seeing Italy: Landscapes of Nation in Goethe's *Italienische Reise* and Its Counter-Narratives," *Monatshefte* 94 (2002): 330–332. Heinrich Niederer argues Goethe sought to avoid sentimental description in the manner of Laurence Sterne. Heinrich Niederer, "Goethes unzeitgemässe Reise nach Italien, 1786–1788," *Jahrbuch des freien deutschen Hochstifts*, 1980, 88.

against the imagistic prefiguration of experience. His letters focus on the gaps between experience, picture, and memory, consciously refusing to fill in the lacunae with an account of how Roman sites “really” appear.²³ We do not get long passages explaining what was excluded from the prints and travelogues Goethe knew before his arrival. In other words, he does not present us with a higher synthetic representation of Italy, one that brings together all the divergent representations into one master account. Instead, his writing comments on the lack of correspondence between print, memory, and experience, thereby forcing the reader to refer to already existing depictions of these sites. Yet, despite his aversion to description, Goethe’s architectural epiphanies are often instigated by the established pictures and commentaries about a given site. Only in the encounters with a building does he realize how very different it is from its representation. In the end, Goethe insists that his conclusions about a building are made in the absence of medial representation in the moment of illumination standing before it. The sight of the building is supposed to supplant the memory of its earlier reproduction in prose and drawing.

Goethe’s identification with Palladio supersedes the education received from his father. He never abandons his fascination with the architect.²⁴ Goethe famously traveled incognito through Italy so as to observe without having to answer for his fame. When pressed for his identity by the police or others, he would answer that he was a wandering architect. Palladio’s profession provides Goethe a cover, one that gives him acceptance among other men, particularly Italian scholars. When locals presume that he is an architect, he does not contradict them. While searching in a bookstore in Padua for Palladio’s treatise, he falls into conversation with other customers, standing around casually consulting books and chatting: “Taking me for an architect, they complimented me on my desire to study this master who had more useful and practical suggestions to offer than even Vitruvius, since he had made a thorough study of classical antiquity and tried to adapt his knowledge to the needs of our times. I had long conversations with these friendly men and learned much about the sights of interest in the town.”²⁵ Ultimately in Rome,

23. In her superb dissertation, Ursula Donat notes a similar tension between the memory of a building and its immediate experience: “Das Wiedersehen gibt die Möglichkeit, die gegenwärtige Anschauung eines Gegenstandes mit dem erinnerten Bild zu vergleichen, d.h. Ideelles und Reales in Beziehung zu setzen. Die Spannung zwischen dem inneren Bild und dem wahrgenommenen Gegenstand wird in der Erinnerung als eine zeithafte Vorstellungsform verbildlicht.” Ursula Donat, “Goethes ‘Italienische Reise’ als Kunstwerk” (inaugural diss., Albert Ludwigs Universität zu Freiburg i. Br., 1981), 53.

24. Decades after his return from Italy, Goethe could still bend a visitor’s ear about the glories of Palladio. Sulpiz Boisserée, as he sought to woo Goethe to support his reconstruction of the Gothic cathedral in Cologne, complained about the uphill battle he faced. He reported his conversation of 8 August 1815: “Goethes Freude an der Architektur, seine rein persönliche Leidenschaft für Palladio, bis ins Grasseste nichts als Palladio und Palladio. Freilich lebt er in Vicenza und Venedig in seinen Werken und Wirksamkeit noch im lebendigen Andenken” (WA Anhang Gespräche 3: 206).

25. Goethe, *Italian Journey*, 70; “Da sie mich für einen Architekten hielten, lobten sie mich, daß ich vor allen andern zu den Studien dieses Meisters schritte, er leiste zu Gebrauch und Anwendung mehr als Vitruv selbst, denn er habe die Alten und das Altertum gründlich studiert und es unsern Bedürfnis-

Goethe's identification with the profession allows him to conceptualize his own development while abandoning his earlier deification of the Renaissance architect.

Both men viewed Rome as integral to their art. Palladio made five trips to Rome to study antiquities as well as contemporary buildings.²⁶ Goethe's engagement with Palladio only reinforced the city's importance. Palladio is the native who points out the route to Rome but is himself absent from the place.²⁷ After seeing copies of Roman sculpture in Venice, Goethe deploys spatial metaphors to describe his efforts to understand ancient art. Palladio is credited with showing Goethe how to proceed: "Many striking portrait busts evoked the glorious days of antiquity. I feel myself, alas, far behind in my knowledge of this period, but at least I know the way. Palladio has opened it to me, and the way to all art and life as well."²⁸ At least three types of movement are indicated in this passage. First, the sight of ancient statues "transports" Goethe into the glorious past, yet this imaginative transferal only underlines how backward Goethe remains as an artist. The resolution to this discrepancy requires a movement forward revealed by Palladio, presumably because Goethe perceives him as a fellow student of antiquity. His adaptations of ancient models suggest how a modern (in the broadest sense) artist might incorporate ancient forms into a new work. Finally, Palladio's "way" can also be understood in simple geographical terms as the road to Rome. In a sense, Palladio operates as Virgil did for Dante, as a guide, teacher, and mentor up to a certain point, both geographically and spiritually. As for Goethe's architectural education, Palladio's *Four Books of Architecture* rearticulates Vitruvius's *Ten Books on Architecture*, the only surviving treatise from antiquity. As he leaves Venice, Goethe buys an Italian edition of the Latin authority but quickly finds it troublesome. Vitruvius's obscure passages require careful interpretation, and soon the tome becomes a burden in his pack: "This tome weighs as heavy in my luggage as it weighs on my brain when I study it."²⁹ Rather than study Vitruvius, Goethe prefers to recall Palladio's buildings, which for him are more fruitful translations of ancient ideals.

Palladio himself puts forward the student-teacher relationship as a guide for understanding his work. At the beginning of the preface, he proposes Vitruvius

sen näherzuführen gesucht. Ich unterhielt mich lange mit diesen freundlichen Männern, erfuhr noch einiges, die Denkwürdigkeiten der Stadt betreffend, und empfahl mich" (27 September 1786).

26. Vaughan Hart and Peter Hicks, eds. and trans., introduction to *Palladio's Rome: A Translation of Andrea Palladio's Two Guidebooks to Rome* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), xxvi.

27. While Goethe's writing about northern Italy is filled with references to the architect, once he reaches Rome, he no longer mentions Palladio, in part because he never built there, but also because once in Rome Goethe has taken the discipline over into a new program.

28. Goethe, *Italian Journey*, 95; "Viele bedeutende Büsten versetzen mich in die alten herrlichen Zeiten. Nur fühle ich leider, wie weit ich in diesen Kenntnissen zurück bin, doch es wird vorwärts gehen, wenigstens weiß ich den Weg. Palladio hat mir ihn auch dazu und zu aller Kunst und Leben geöffnet" (8 October 1786).

29. Goethe, *Italian Journey*, 103; "Allein dieser Foliante lastet in meinem Gepäck wie das Studium desselben auf meinem Gehirn" (12 October 1786).

as his teacher: "Mi proposi per maestro, e guida Vitruvio."³⁰ Because of his apprenticeship to Vitruvius, Palladio becomes a mediator between the modern reader and the ancient master. Rather than display impatience with Vitruvius, as his Renaissance contemporaries had done, Palladio promises gently to clarify some of the darker passages in the master's work: "And I make no doubt, but that they, who shall read this book, and shall consider the designs in it carefully, may be able to understand many places, which in Vitruvius are reputed very difficult."³¹ As Goethe's *Italian Journey* shows, the contemplation of architecture sets up a tension between building, image, and text that exceeds any insight gained by reading alone. Palladio's buildings embody the rules of ancients, their form hints at an even older norm, but, what is most important for Goethe, they do not prescribe principles. Buildings bear an aesthetic truth for Goethe, which architectural treatises can never provide. When Palladio writes that he seeks to educate the reader so that he "may learn, by little and little, to lay aside the strange abuses, the barbarous inventions, the superfluous expence, and (what is of greater consequence) avoid the various and continual ruins that have been seen in many fabricks," it would not have been difficult for Goethe to have understood these lessons as applying to himself.³²

Goethe's understanding of Palladio's work is not confined to his *Four Books of Architecture*. His intentions are imprinted in three media: drawing, writing, and building. All three provide a means for Palladio to translate Vitruvius. "I find Palladio, by his own way of thinking and creating, a much better interpreter of Vitruvius than his Italian translator," remarks Goethe.³³ Visiting the sites depicted in Palladio's treatise makes clear that the book stands not merely as a commentary on the architecture but as an autonomous work with its own agenda.³⁴ For example, the buildings that were never completed are augmented by drawings that show the finished structure. At the same time, the prints and their accompanying descriptions are also a disappointment, for they do not live up to the practical obligation that architectural plans accurately depict the building. Ultimately, Goethe tries to resolve the mutual inadequacy and supplementation through an imaginary conversation

30. Andrea Palladio, *Quattro libri dell'architettura*, facsimile (Milan: Ulrico Hoepli, 1990), 5.

31. Andrea Palladio, *The Four Books of Architecture*, trans. Isaac Ware (London: Isaac Ware, 1738; repr., New York: Dover, 1965), 80.

32. Palladio, "Preface to the Reader," in *Four Books of Architecture*, n. p.

33. Goethe, *Italian Journey*, 103; "Palladio hat mir durch seine Worte und Werke, durch seine Art und Weise des Denkens und Schaffens den Vitruv schon nähergebracht und verdolmetscht, besser als die italienische Übersetzung tun kann" (12 October 1786).

34. Deborah Howard summarizes the current view among architectural historians regarding the discrepancies between the treatise and the actual buildings: "Neither graphic nor written descriptions can be taken literally. Yet when compared with the actual buildings they throw light on Palladio's search for a complete architectural system. . . . Thus Palladio's own specific experiences were translated into a series of ideal models for more general application. He obviously saw his treatise as a work of art in its own right, and it was perhaps his greatest achievement." Howard, "Four Centuries of Literature," 228 n. 3.

with the “spirit” of Palladio, during which he claims to discover the third element behind the architect’s buildings and drawings, his poetic intuition of antiquity.

Once in Rome, Goethe deploys the figure of the architect as a metaphor for *Bildung*. On December 20, 1786, he writes:

I am like an architect who wanted to erect a tower and began by laying a bad foundation. Before it is too late, he realizes this and deliberately tears down all that he has built so far above ground. He tries to enlarge and improve his design, to make his foundation more secure, and looks forward happily to building something that will last.³⁵

The double positing of the self as both house and architect alludes to René Descartes’ inquiry into the foundations of his own beliefs.³⁶ Whereas in part 3 of his “Discourse on Method” Descartes thought to find another abode while he examined his foundation, Goethe suggests a longer process of renovation in which the self cannot escape its own space.³⁷ The metaphor of the house under renovation is a representation of the paradox of positing a self that is distinct from the self that posits. Edgar Landgraf refers to the problem as the “paradox of self-indication”: “The self, in order to indicate (think) itself, must make itself different from itself to be able to do so.”³⁸ The paradox in Goethe’s metaphor is that he identifies both with the house and with the architect who transforms it. Goethe scholarship has long treated this double character of subject and object as a central feature of autobiographical discourse in general. Erich Trunz characterized *Poetry and Truth* in visual terms as a circle in which the observer and the observed are the same individual: “The problem of every autobiography: the viewer is also the viewed; he writes an epic and is himself the primary figure in the picture.” (Das Problem jeder Autobiographie: der Betrachtende ist selbst der Betrachtete; er schreibt wie ein Epiker und ist selber die Hauptgestalt im Bilde.)³⁹

The architectural metaphor represents an affirmation of reeducation, even as it uses classical terms to critique modern structuring of buildings and subjects. Renovating an existing building while living within it becomes the new means

35. Goethe, *Italian Journey*, 151; “Ich bin wie ein Baumeister, der einen Turm aufführen wollte und ein schlechtes Fundament gelegt hatte; er wird es noch beizeiten gewahr und bricht gern wieder ab, was er schon aus der Erde gebracht hat, seinen Grundriß sucht er zu erweitern, zu veredeln, sich seines Grundes mehr zu versichern und freut sich schon im voraus der gewissem Festigkeit des künftigen Baues.”

36. René Descartes, “Discourse on Method,” in *Selected Philosophical Writings*, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 31.

37. For a nuanced reading of how Descartes deploys architectural theory in recounting the fable of his philosophical investigations, see Claudia Brodsky, *Lines of Thought: Discourse, Architectonics, and the Origin of Modern Philosophy* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996).

38. Edgar Landgraf, “Self-Forming Selves: Autonomy and Artistic Creativity in Goethe and Moritz,” *Goethe Yearbook* 11 (2002): 159–176, here 160.

39. Erich Trunz, “Kommentar,” in HA 9: 611.

of conceptualizing the Italian experience. The tower is the self, which the artist constructs as his most important work of art. The perspective provided by standing above other buildings is not used to survey a distant landscape; rather, the tower's vantage point affords a view onto itself. Far from being blind to itself, the tower is distinctly conscious of its own appearance. Just as the interpretation of buildings was a means of conceptualizing the artist who created them, so the building becomes a metaphor for the observer's self-reflection. The figure that organizes this movement, which stands back momentarily and contemplates the self, is the architect, who in the fullness of his theoretical and practical knowledge can shape the self even as he is forced to compromise with practical necessities. By assuming the imaginary position of the architect, Goethe commences to build nothing less than himself.

In Goethe's equation of himself with a building, Palladio's symmetry and organic integration of parts serve as model not only of the autonomous artwork but also for the reeducated idealist subject. The new Goethe, the harmoniously integrated subject of *Bildung*, seeks to be as balanced as Palladio's villas. The terminology of classical architecture integrates readily with the Christian theology, so that both discourses promise to resolve the alienation of being divided into subject and object: "The rebirth which is transforming me from within continues."⁴⁰ Goethe's description of himself as a house begun in error with a poor foundation alludes as much to the biblical parable of the man who built his house on sand and the man who built his house on rock (Matthew 7:24–27) as to Descartes' appropriation of architectural practice. Goethe alters the biblical tale to suggest that the self is like a house constantly undergoing renovation, that the self is an accumulation of elements, which have no necessary order. A plan for articulating the self can be designed only after the foundation has been laid. This rethinking or redrawing amounts to much more than a simple addition; instead it requires the redefinition of the subject. Close to the end of his stay in Rome, Goethe returns to the surprising discovery that the minor alterations or in this case the supplement develops into a fundamental reorientation: "The visitor from the north imagines that Rome will supplement his own existence and supply what he lacks: it only gradually dawns on him, to his great discomfort, that he has to alter his reactions completely and start from the very beginning."⁴¹ The Italian journey did not merely provide a few further images for Goethe's treasure-house of impressions. Within the terms of the present study, one would say that he did not merely acquire an interest in classical architecture but instead assumed a new spectatorial relationship to himself. Out of

40. Goethe, *Italian Journey*, 151; "Die Wiedergeburt, die mich von innen heraus umarbeitet, wirkt immer fort" (20 December 1786).

41. Goethe, *Italian Journey*, 414; "Der nordische Reisende glaubt, er komme nach Rom, um ein Supplement seines Daseins zu finden, auszufüllen, was ihm fehlt; allein er wird erst nach und nach mit großer Unbehaglichkeit gewahr, daß er ganz den Sinn ändern und von vorn anfangen müsse" (October 1787; HA 11: 430).

an identification with the architect as artist, Goethe as the subject of *Bildung* began to criticize both the architect behind the building as well as the subject contemplating the structure.

Just as Dante moved beyond the lowest levels of the Inferno without Virgil's guidance, so Goethe claims that he too enters Rome without a mentor: "Now, at last, I have arrived in the First City of the World! Had I seen it fifteen years ago with an intelligent man to guide me, I should have called myself lucky, but, since I was destined to visit it alone and trust to my own eyes, I am happy, at least, to have been granted this joy so late in life."⁴² Like Dante, he finds himself bewildered in his middle years.⁴³ Instead of traveling through the city with a guide, Goethe is obliged to see Rome "mit eignen Augen," a telling phrase that emphasizes the competition between personal experience and paternal memory. As he writes in *Poetry and Truth*, his first conscious recollections were of living in a large, old house that, he later notes, contained an appealing set of Italian prints:

Within the house my gaze was drawn most to a row of Roman prospects with which my father had decorated an antechamber. They had been etched by some adept predecessors to Piranesi who understood architecture and perspective well. . . . Every day I saw here the Piazza del Popolo, the Coliseum, St. Peter's Piazza, the Church of St. Peter's from within and without, Castel Sant Angelo, and other places.⁴⁴

The pictures draw his eyes much as the city of Rome does. The reflexive verb suggests an operation of the pictures; they attract viewing, as if the impulse to look came from them, and not the spectator. The image directs the viewer, rather than that the subject notices the image. For the young Goethe, the Italian pictures stand out among the many local paintings in the house. For the father as well as the son, the pictures lead desire away from Frankfurt, even as their allure is conditioned by the place within which they appear. The Italian prints are themselves framed by the house, which is so clearly marked as belonging to the father. Indeed, architecture in Goethe's work is often depicted as a legacy passed down by some masculine progenitor, a structure already built that needs to be confronted, understood, and at most can only be remodeled, but not torn down in some Cartesian fantasy of

42. Goethe, *Italian Journey*, 128; "Ja, ich bin endlich in dieser Hauptstadt der Welt angelangt! Wenn ich sie in guter Begleitung, angeführt von einem recht verständigen Manne, vor fünfzehn Jahren gesehen hätte, wollte ich mich glücklich preisen" (1 November 1787).

43. Italo Michele Battafarano also compares Goethe and Palladio with Dante and Virgil, in "Böhme und Palladio in Goethes *Italienischer Reise*," *Morgen-Glantz: Zeitschrift der Christian Knorr von Rosenroth-Gesellschaft* 9 (1999): 274.

44. Goethe, FA 1.14: 19; "Innerhalb des Hauses zog meinen Blick am meisten eine Reihe römischer Prospekte auf sich, mit welchen der Vater einen Vorsaal ausgeschmückt hatte, gestochen von einigen geschickten Vorgängern des Piranesi, die sich auf Architektur und Perspektive wohl verstanden. . . . Hier sah ich täglich die Piazza del Popolo, das Coliseo, den Petersplatz, die Peterskirche von außen und innen, die Engelsburg und so manches andere."

autonomous thought. This respect for buildings as having been donated by earlier generations is itself an inheritance. In *Poetry and Truth*, we are told that Johann Caspar Goethe waited until after his parent's death before remodeling the cramped medieval house to imitate the palazzi he had seen in Italy. We learn further that architectural tastes are the subject of angry debates between father and son. Johann Caspar was inevitably quite proud of his Italian facsimile, and he becomes irritated when his impertinent son, back home from university and bound for Strasbourg, mocks it. To be drawn into the engravings, to move into the pictures, even as a memory that informs Goethe's autobiography, requires one to reenter the father's house. Rome is of course aligned with the symbolism of the father on many levels. Both Johann Gottfried Herder and Sigmund Freud put off visiting the city because they associated it too strongly with the Catholic Church.⁴⁵ Freud refers to his Rome neurosis in the *Interpretation of Dreams*. He stayed away in part because of his identification with the Semitic Hannibal, who, after crushing the Roman armies in the battle of Trasimene Lake, refrained from marching on the city, even as the gates stood open.⁴⁶ Goethe's engagement with Roman authority, on the other hand, subsumes the city's many religious connotations under a critical reinvestment in his father's simulation of Italian architecture.

Kurt Eissler reads the Italian journey in direct Oedipal terms as Goethe's effort to replace his father and take possession of his mother. The discrepancy between the actual place and memory reinforces the urge to see for oneself the places depicted in the father's engravings and to thereby assume his "place."⁴⁷ Taking the paternal position requires a reentry into childhood. Fittingly, Goethe describes Rome as spread out before him like gifts at Christmas.⁴⁸ Its many piazzas appear as living embodiments of childhood desires: "All the dreams of my youth have come to life."⁴⁹ The Oedipal usurpation is never complete. While the gap between representation and the represented justifies Goethe's presence in the paternal city, it also allows a personal claim to possess the place, apart from the predetermination his father's education imposed on him: "Everything I have known for so long through paintings, drawings, etchings, woodcuts, plaster casts and cork models is now assembled

45. Richard H. Armstrong, *A Compulsion for Antiquity: Freud and the Ancient World* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 118.

46. Sigmund Freud, *Die Traumdeutung* (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer Verlag, 1972), 205–209.

47. Kurt Eissler, *Goethe: A Psychoanalytic Study, 1775–1786* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1963), 1003–1018.

48. While childhood in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* is played out under the sign of the Mother, the *Italienische Reise* engages the Father as the source and the rival for pleasure. Friedrich Kittler explains: "Kategorisch sagt der Roman, daß 'die Kinderfreuden' 'eigentlich zu erfinden und anzuwenden nicht des Vaters, sondern der Mutter Sache ist'"; however, his thesis does not apply to the nondomestic space of Italy. Friedrich Kittler, "Über die Sozialisation Wilhelm Meisters," in *Dichtung als Sozialisationsspiel* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 19. See also Melitta Gerhard, "Rom in seiner Bedeutung für Goethe—eine 'neue Welt,'" *Jahrbuch des freien deutschen Hochstifts*, 1977, 84.

49. Goethe, *Italian Journey*, 129; "Alle Träume meiner Jugend seh' ich nun lebendig" (1 November 1786).

before me. Wherever I walk, I come upon familiar objects in an unfamiliar world; everything is just as I imagined it, yet everything is new.”⁵⁰ The knotted density of the remembrances Rome conjures up makes the city a particularly potent space for autobiographical reflection, for it brings together many images viewed over his life into a single location. They stand almost as if in a row: the city appears as an art gallery not only of itself, but also of Goethe’s education. Crucially, the failure of the recollected images to represent the city allows Goethe a distance to reflect on his own investment in them. The contrast between image and reality becomes a coda for the autobiographical bifurcation of the subject critically reflecting on itself. Sorting through his expectations after his first brush with Palladio in Vicenza, Goethe also states that the disparate images, which he has esteemed so highly all his life, can now be rearranged according to their actual appearance: “The main thing is that all these objects that have worked upon my imagination from a distance now stand too tall to be reduced to an orderly domestic coexistence.”⁵¹ Seeing the sites makes clear just how much Goethe’s own fantasy contributed to their value. With some caution, he notes that visiting famous artworks can often end in disappointment. The traveler in Italy “expects to see all the things about which he has heard so much, not as the heavens and circumstance have left them, but rather in the pure form in which they stand in his imagination, and he finds almost nothing so, he can enjoy almost nothing in this manner. Here something is destroyed, there it is painted over, here something stinks, something else is smoking, here another thing is dirty, in the taverns and with the people.”⁵² This medial disappointment never seriously threatens Goethe’s pleasure, for the discrepancies only heighten his critical desire to uncouple the present from his father’s tales. The immediate conditions on the ground do not vitiate the inherited images’ glow. The loss of their aura becomes fascinating in its own right as an affirmation of the spectator’s immediate perceptions.

Modern editors presume that the familial prints were taken from *Il nuovo teatro delle fabbriche, et edificii in prospettiv adi roma moderna*, published in three volumes beginning in 1665 by the engraver Giovanni Battista Falda, with a fourth volume by

50. Goethe, *Italian Journey*, 129; “Alles, was ich in Gemälden und Zeichnungen, Kupfern und Holzschnitten, in Gips und Kork schon lange gekannt, steht nun beisammen vor mir; wohin ich gehe, finde ich eine Bekanntschaft in einer neuen Welt; es ist alles, wie ich mir’s dachte, und alles neu” (1 November 1786).

51. Goethe, *Diaries*; “Die Hauptsache ist daß alle diese Gegenstände, die nun schon über 30 Jahre auf meine Imagination abwesend gewürckt haben und also alle zu hoch stehn, nun in den ordentlichen *Cammer* und *Haus* Ton der Coexistenz herunter gestimmt werden” (24 September 1786; *Tagebücher*; FA 2.3: 72).

52. Goethe, *Diaries*; “erwartet alle die Gegenstände von denen er so vieles hat reden hören, nicht zu finden, wie der Himmel und die Umstände wollen, sondern so rein wie sie in seiner Imagination stehen und fast nichts findet er so, fast nichts kann er so genießen. Hier ist was zerstört, hier was angekleckt, hier stinckts, hier rauchts, hier ist Schmutz pp, so in den Wirthshäusern, mit den Menschen” (25 September 1786; *Tagebücher*; FA 2.3: 75).

Alessandro Specchi.⁵³ These tomes depicted the massive changes Pope Alexander VII had undertaken to revitalize Rome as a cultural center for Catholic pilgrims and European tourists.⁵⁴ After assuming the Holy See, Alexander started an ambitious plan that sought to clear the crowded streets and piazzas of peddlers and uneven houses, to expedite the completion of many half-finished churches and palaces, and to erect new monuments that would reestablish the symbolic might of Rome.⁵⁵ The greatest of these projects was Bernini's colonnade before St. Peter's cathedral. Falda's prints depicted many renovations in their projected state of completion; as a matter of history, many were left incomplete because of local opposition and short finances.⁵⁶ Today, the ideological intention behind the prints is unmistakable, but to a middle-aged German recounting his Italian adventures to his wife and children, these prints served as the visual anchors for personal tales.⁵⁷ Goethe mentions these prints not for their artistry, but because they illustrated the place he had begun studying as a boy. Their importance cannot be underestimated. Goethe felt so secure in his visual knowledge of Roman settings that in his essay "On German Architecture" he mocks Bernini's colonnade, a site he would not visit for another two decades.⁵⁸ Indeed, one common criticism of Goethe's early architectural commentary is that he thinks only in two-dimensional terms. Even the monumental Strasbourg cathedral is appreciated only for its facade. At no point does Goethe describe the interior, even though he mentions entering the church. Years of viewing prints may have trained him to think about architecture primarily in terms of its public surface. Once in Rome, Goethe would have realized that many of Falda's and Specchi's *vedute* were themselves overly complete. In the case of Falda's print of St. Peter's, Bernini's colonnade is shown in a state it never attained. These *vedute* were distinct from Palladio's illustrations in that they showed an ensemble of buildings. Rather than depict a single monument, they diffused their presentation by

53. See FA 1.14: 1077; see also Lothar Müller, "Karl Philipp Moritz erklärt Arkadien," in *Wiederholte Spiegelungen: Weimarer Klassik, 1759–1832; Ständige Ausstellung des Goethe-Nationalmuseums*, ed. Gerhard Schuster and Caroline Gille (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1999), 314 n. 20.

54. Falda's collection differed from its predecessors in its depiction of contemporary architecture in Rome, and not just the ruins of antiquity. *The Origins of the Italian Vedute—An Exhibition by the Department of Art, Brown University* (Providence, RI: Brown University, 1978), 65.

55. Richard Krautheimer explains that Falda's collection portrayed Rome as a sequence of theatrical scenes in which papal power displayed itself through architecture and urban design. Richard Krautheimer, *The Rome of Alexander VII, 1655–1667* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), 3–7.

56. For a timeless story of clearing streets, see Tod Marder, "Alexander VII, Bernini, and the Urban Setting of the Pantheon in the Seventeenth Century," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 50 (1991): 273–292.

57. Paul A. Wilson, "The Image of Chigi Rome: G. B. Falda's *Il nuovo teatro*," *Architectura* 26.1 (1996): 33.

58. Addressing the classicist critic, he rants: "Die herrliche Wirkung der Säulen traf dich, du wolltest auch ihrer brauchen und mauertest sie ein, wolltest auch Säulenreihen haben, und umzirkeltest den Vorhof der Peterskirche mit Marmorgängen, die nirgends hin noch her führen, daß Mutter Natur, die das ungehörige und unnötige verachtet und haßt." Goethe, "Von deutscher Baukunst," FA 1.18: 111.

showing its surroundings.⁵⁹ Their goal was to present a collection of structures as a coherent scene. They trained the viewer to perceive the city in formal terms, and not as an incoherent pile of houses. Pope Alexander's wish to create long lines of sight down straight boulevards, where monumental buildings stood without hovels and stalls clustered about, was neatly confirmed within the frame of Falda's *vedute*. Palladio, on the other hand, was concerned primarily with the depiction of a single building so that the construction of its elements could be understood in technical terms. Between Falda's clean, perspectival scenes of Rome and Palladio's precise and harmonious details, Italy would have seemed to contain nothing but aesthetically thought-through cities.

This experience of visiting places known only through media reverses the common eighteenth-century trope, one Goethe uses often in his early writings, wherein the prose reader claims that the text is so convincing that he can see the places and people rising up before him. According to Winfried Menninghaus, this readerly mode, "Darstellung," requires the text to bring forth a mental image in the reader.⁶⁰ Arriving at the place that his father's prints depicted, Goethe moves in the opposite direction of the reader who visualizes a text. He completes the interpolation begun in Frankfurt, positioning himself in the frame of Falda's and Specchi's *vedute*, only to recognize their illusion.

Not every traveler could remain so sanguine under Italian conditions. While on his own, less happy journey, Herder writes to his wife: "Thank God that another eight days have passed in dreary Rome! I cannot develop a taste for Rome; rather, the place becomes more and more burdensome with each day."⁶¹ Herder had a miserable impression yet felt compelled, as so many later German travelers did, to compare his travels with those of Goethe. He struggles to assert the legitimacy of his negative impressions despite his friend's euphoria: "I am not Goethe; in my life I have never followed his maxims, and so I cannot start to do so in Rome."⁶² Goethe, Herder explained, took to the place as a child who had been granted his

59. Fernando Marias, "From the 'Ideal City' to Real Cities: Perspectives, Chorographies, Models, Vedute," in *The Triumph of the Baroque: Architecture in Europe, 1600–1750*, ed. Henry Millon (New York: Rizzoli, 1999), 229.

60. Winfried Menninghaus, "'Darstellung': Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstocks Eröffnung eines neuen Paradigmas," in *Was heißt 'Darstellen'?* ed. Christiaan L. Hart Nibbrig (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1994), 205–226.

61. Letter to Caroline Herder, 7 March 1789, in *Herders Reise nach Italien, Herders Briefwechsel mit seiner Gattin*, ed. Heinrich Düntzer and Ferdinand Gottfried von Herder (Gießen: J. Richter'sche Buchhandlung, 1859), 270: "Gottlob, daß wieder acht Tage in dem traurigen Rom vorüber sind! Ich kann der Hauptstadt der Welt keinen Geschmack abgewinnen, vielmehr wird sie mir von Tage zu Tage mehr läßtig."

62. Letter to Caroline Herder, 4 November 1788, in *Herders Reise nach Italien*, 155: "Ich bin nicht Goethe, ich habe auf *meinem* Lebenswege nie nach seinen Maximen handeln können; also kann ichs auch in Rom nicht."

wish: "Goethe talks about Rome like a child, and like child, lived here with all his singularity, which is why he praised it so."⁶³

The difference between the textual mediation of a site and its actual condition corresponds in Goethe's aesthetic to the difference between poetic imagination and prosaic description. In *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, the narrator states that pictures stored in memory are the material out of which the protagonist composes fiction. Memory is presented in the ancient rhetorical tradition as a storehouse from which raw material can be drawn, a move that in the eighteenth-century German context enables fictional *Darstellung*. In book 2, chapter 10, we are told that Wilhelm was obliged to write a small play while out on a pleasure cruise: he "composed out of the wealth of his treasury of living images an entire play complete with acts, scenes, characters and plot complexities."⁶⁴ Only at the end of the novel does it become clear that this storehouse of images consists of Renaissance Italian paintings.

Goethe reenacts the surprise and delight of moving into a space one has known since childhood when, at the novel's culmination, Wilhelm Meister enters the house that once belonged to the uncle of the idealized "schöne Seele."⁶⁵ Stepping through the doorway, he has the double sense that he has found the most wonderful building he has ever experienced, a holy site that makes him completely human, and that he has known, at least partially, since his childhood. In the uncle's house, he recognizes works of art that had once belonged to his grandfather. They are all Italian masters collected by the grandfather during his journey south. Unfortunately, Wilhelm's father sold them off to raise funds once the grandfather had died. In a slight shift from his own biography, Goethe credits Wilhelm's grandfather with having introduced him to Italy. Regardless of which paternal figure shows Wilhelm the first images of Italy, the epiphany in the uncle's villa corresponds to Goethe's recognition of Italian buildings from the pictures in his father's house. The parallels to Goethe's *Italian Journey* are manifest, even as the novel shifts the site of recognition to northern Europe. The Italian site is rearticulated in the novel as German and neo-Palladian. The uncle, like the historical Goethe and his real-life father, recreated his own Italian journey by replicating classical space—building, sculpture, and painting—in Germany. By the end of *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, we have a complex circuit of Italian images that instill a desire to travel. At no point in the

63. Letter to Caroline Herder, 4 November 1788, in *Herders Reise nach Italien*, 155: "Goethe spricht über Rom, wie ein Kind, und hat auch, wie ein Kind, freilich mit aller *Eigenheit*, hier gelebet; deshalb ers denn auch so sehr preiset."

64. "komponierte aus dem Reichtum seines lebendigen Bildervorrats sogleich ein ganzes Schauspiel mit allen Akten, Szenen, Charakteren und Verwicklungen" (FA 1.9: 477).

65. Susan Bernstein also links the Oheim's house with the larger project of *Bildung* via the Goethehaus museum in Weimar. Indeed, the house portrays how the impressions of Italy ought to be preserved in a collection after the journey's completion. While the contemporary museum is an outgrowth of the scene in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, the parental Goethe house in Frankfurt (now another museum) was a precursor. See Bernstein's excellent "Goethe's Architectonic *Bildung* and Buildings in Classical Weimar," *MLN* 114.5 (1999): 1014–1036, here 1028.

novel does Wilhelm enter Italy; instead he hears Mignon's poem about wanting to return to its warm smells and lovely spaces, and he rediscovers his grandfather's lost Italian paintings. The novel combines discovery with recollection, suggesting that first impressions are actually a return to a paternal legacy.

As Herder suggested, the memory of childhood lends Goethe's Italian journey the quality of a wish fulfillment. The very structure of visual representation reinforces the desire instilled by parental reminiscences. If perspectival pictures use illusion to make an absent place present, then standing in the same location as the prints seems to fill the gap inherent in representation. In Goethe's case the absence implied by the picture certainly did instill a desire to visit Italy, in order to perceive what was indirectly presented in the drawing. Accordingly, to be in Italy brought the adult back to the desires of childhood. Every forgotten thought seems to come true in Italy, yet the physical appearance of these places removes their previous fantastical character. Even as Italy fulfills a wish, the fantasy is exposed as an illusion. If we focus only on the childhood fantasy and its fulfillment, we would be warranted in claiming a reductive Lacanian position, namely, that Goethe's fulfillment in Rome is determined by desires that are the effect of another's signifiers. Throughout the *Italian Journey*, Goethe acknowledges and presumes that he, and his readers, carry around with them an assortment of mental images of Rome, and that they have recourse to engravings at any time. For this reason he considers the only point worth discussing to be the gap between these images (both mental and real) and the site as experienced by the well-educated traveler. The disruptions in the media and travel circuit, the moments when architecture fails to embody its visual ideal, are also the moments of insight, the ruins wherein the classical subject of *Bildung* begins to reconstitute itself.